



CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

October 8, 2009

Ms. Deborah C. Essler
Northern New England District Manager
United States Postal Service
151 Forest Avenue
Portland, ME 04101

Dear Ms. Essler,

In the U.S. Postal Service's honorable attempt to achieve long-term financial solutions, it has come to my attention that Station A at 622 Congress Street in Portland, Maine is being considered for closure. While I understand the necessity of such closures and the difficult decisions that accompany closures, I strongly recommend that the U.S. Postal Service keep Station A open.

I believe that Station A plays a vital role in the surrounding community. Station A is located within one the most vulnerable communities in Maine's largest city and is home to large populations of elderly and low-income families. Due to the transportation complications that arise with limited income or disability, many of these residents will not have access to basic banking or postal transactions without the services provided by Station A.

There is no question about the vulnerability of the neighborhood surrounding Postal Station A – according to the U. S. Census Bureau, the poverty rate of the Census tract served by Postal Station A is 65% greater than the City of Portland average and 100% greater than the state average. The Census Bureau also reported that people in this area depend on walking accessibility more than people from other areas - nearly 31% of residents walk to work in comparison with fewer than 9% citywide and only 4% statewide. Approximately three-fourths of people over age 85 in this area do not even have access to a vehicle – far exceeding the statewide average of 15%.

Another indication of this community's vulnerability is the abundance of low-income housing provided by the City of Portland. More than 700 residents live in subsidized housing in a two block radius of Postal Station A - 160 elderly and disabled residents live at 579 Congress Street, 100 low-income families live at 658 Congress Street, 169 elderly and disabled residents live at 100 State Street, 97 low-income families live at 638 Congress Street, 100 low-income families live at 633 Congress Street, 43 elderly and disabled residents live at 206 State Street – and the list goes on.

The personal accounts of my constituents have been equally compelling - one building manager said, "Postal Station A is a necessity to our residents. Every month they cash their Social Security checks and turn them into money orders at Postal Station A. Many of them are in wheel chairs, I just can't see them going up and down the hill in the ice and snow of winter. It's important to remember that disabled people deal with change differently than most, and they have depended on Postal Station A for a long time."

I believe it is the responsibility of the U.S. Postal Service to consider the needs of low-income, elderly, and disabled communities in Maine. I ask you to consider the incalculable affects that closing Postal Station A will have on customers in Portland, Maine. The removal of Postal Station A will increase the distance of the closest Post Office for many residents and will add significant commute time for those who cannot afford to travel by car.

I urge you to consider the community and economic impacts while coming to a final decision on Station A. Thank you for your consideration, and please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide you with any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chellie" followed by a stylized flourish.

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

cc: Postmaster General John E. Potter